

R/T/F 420-1

## **Film Theory**

Spring 2004

Chuck Kleinhans

MW 9-11, 100 Annie May Swift

office hours: Tu 3-5, and by appointment, 209 AMS

chuckkle@northwestern.edu

The course examines the major aesthetic and other theoretical issues developed in film theory and practice. It serves as an introduction for students studying film theory for the first time, though it also serves as a review and synthesis for students who have some prior experience with film theory. The course studies aesthetic and cultural issues as a background to film theory, surveys the major figures and issues in film theory, and makes connections to related media and cultural analysis. The first quarter of the course is an introduction and historical overview. The second quarter concentrates on contemporary discussions in greater depth.

The course is organized as a reading, lecture, and discussion experience. Readings should be done in advance and brought to class. The lectures will provide a broad background to the readings, discuss some particular points in the readings in detail, and provide the experience of seeing how one theorist, the teacher, uses theory. Discussion of particular readings and screenings of some films (and excerpts) will be part of most classes. Students will be assigned several short essays and a take home final. Attendance is taken into account in the final grade.

Students without a background in film studies will concentrate on a core set of readings and background readings on film studies. Additional outside screenings will be expected to "fill in the gaps" for students who are not familiar with, say, Italian neorealism. Students with a background in film history and critical thought will do the core readings and a series of advanced theoretical essays and some commentary.

All students are required to have an e-mail address and to participate in Course Management System (CMS; Blackboard). In addition some readings will be on Electronic Reserve at the library.

Required texts. Available at Norris Center Store

Hill, J. and P. C. Gibson (1998). The Oxford Guide to Film Studies. New York, Oxford University Press.

Braudy, L. and M. Cohen, Eds. (1999). Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings. NY, Oxford UP.

Supplemental texts (do not purchase until after first class meeting)

Francesco Casetti, Theories of Cinema: 1945-1995. Austin: U Texas Press. 1999.  
 Robert Stam, Film Theory: An Introduction. Malden MA: Blackwell, 2000.  
 Jacques Aumont, et al. Aesthetics of Film. Austin: U of Texas Press, 1983.

### **Mon Mar 29**

course admin  
 introduction

### **Wed Mar 31**

intro to aesthetics  
 Raymond Williams, "Realism" (ER--electronic reserve)  
 Richard Dyer, "Intro to Film Studies" (OxGuide pp 3-10)

### **Mon Apr 5**

Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"  
 (FT&C, 731-751)  
 report: Benjamin in context  
 background--Kolker, "Film Text and Film Form" and Wood and Wollen,  
 OxGuide 11-29)

### **Wed Apr 7**

Munsterberg, "The Means of the Photoplay" (FT&C, 401-408)  
 report one: Munsterberg  
 Kracauer, "Cult of Distraction," "The Mass Ornament" (ER)  
 report two: Kracauer, "Little Shopgirls go to the Movies" (McEwan)

### **Mon Apr 12**

Jean Epstein, "On Magnification," (ER)  
 "The Senses I (b), " (ER)  
 "On Certain Characterisitics of *Photogenie*" (ER)  
 report: early French film theories (Lewis) Dulac, "The Expressive Techniques of  
 the Cinema" (in Abel)  
 Béla Balász, *The Close Up*, (FT&C)  
 Report: Béla Balász, *The Face of Man* (FT&C)

### **Wed Apr 14**

Ian Christie, "Formalism and new-formalism" (in OxGuide, pp 58-65)  
 Shlovsky, "Poetry and Prose in Cinema"  
 Report: on Vertov, (Booth)  
 Documents from *Lef* (handout)  
 Vertov, "Cine Eyes: A Revolution"  
 Shub, "Factory of Facts"  
 Shlovsky, "Where is Dziga Vertov Striding?"

### **Mon Apr 19**

Eisenstein, "Beyond the Shot" (FT&C 15-25)  
 "A Dialectic Approach to Film Form," (FT&C 25-43)

Report: Dialectic

**Wed Apr 21**

Brecht "The Radio as an Appartus of Communication" (ER)

Arnheim "In Praise of Blindness" (ER)

Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Alexandrov, "Statement on Sound" (FT&C 360)

report--issues of sound (overview)

screening: CORRECTION PLEASE (Noel Burch)

**Mon Apr 26**

Richter, The Struggle for Film (exerpts) (handout)

Eisenstein, "Dickens, Griffith and the Film Today" (FT&C)

Report on Dickens,

Report on MPAA code

**Wed Apr 28**

Bazin, "The Evolution of the Language of Film" (FT&C, pp 43-56)

Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image" (FT&C, pp 195-8)

**Mon May 3**

Bazin "An Aesthetic of Reality" (ER)

background, Morticelli, "Italian Postwar Cinema..." OxGuide455-460

report:

paper no. 2 due

**Wed May 5**

review of papers

intro Classic Hollywood cinema (handout)

**Mon May 10**

Crofts, Authorship and Hollywood

Butler, The star system and Hollywood

read--one additional essay from FT&C on authorship or star (any in section V pp 509-606) **paper no 3**

**Wed May 12**

Ryall, Genre and Hollywood

Williams, on melodrama (handout)

read--one additional essay on genre from FT&C (section VI pp607-724) **paper no 3**

**Mon May 17**

Metz, "Some Points in the Semiotics of the Cinema" FT&C

Metz, "Problems of Denotation in the Fiction Film" FT&C

**Wed May 19**

screening: **Morocco. (exerpt)**

Cahiers du cinéma, **Morocco** analysis (handout)

Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" FT&C

**Mon May 24**

Creed, Film and Psychoanalysis

Augst, "The Turn toward Psychoanalysis" [handout]

Heath, "Narrative Space" [handout]

**Wed May 26**

screening: **Two Or Three Things I Know About Her**  
or other Godard film

**Mon May 31**

**Memorial Day, holiday**

**Wed June 2**

wrap up lecture

screening for final

**Final**

--take home essay due [Tuesday June 8, 9 am]

**Short paper no. 1** 10% of final. A 500 word summary of an assigned reading

**Short paper no. 2** 10% of final. A 500 word essay providing a critical context for an assigned reading, screening, issue, or figure discussed in the course. This will be assigned by the instructor, and presented orally in class as well as published in written form.

**Summary no. 1.** 20% of final. A 500 word summary plus a 1000 word interpretive essay from a provided bibliography on Eisenstein, Kracauer, or Bazin. The important part of the project is your own analysis and evaluation of the essay, based on your knowledge.

**Summary no. 2.** 20% of final. Another 500 word summary plus a 1200 word interpretive essay from a provided bibliography and filmography. You will summarize an article that depends on analysis of one film (such as the editors of *Cahiers du cinéma* on **Young Mr. Lincoln**) and view the film. The important part of the project is your own analysis and evaluation of the essay, based on your knowledge of the film.

**Final take home essay.** 30 % of final grade. 1500-2500 word essay in response to a question handed out at the end of the course intended to synthesize your learning in the course. Due in Chuck's mailbox and e-mail

### articles on Electronic Reserve

Raymond Williams, "Realism" in Williams, Keywords (Oxford)

Seigfried Kracauer, "Cult of Distraction," and "The Mass Ornament" in Kracauer, The Mass Ornament (Harvard) FOOTNOTES

Jean Epstein, "On Magnification," and "The Senses I (b), and "On Certain Characteristics of Photogenie" in Abel, R., Ed. (1988). French Film Theory and Criticism: 1907-1939. Princeton, Princeton UP. vol. 1. vol. 2 FOOTNOTES

B. Brecht "The Radio as an Apparatus of Communication" in Strauss, N., Ed. (1993). Radiotext(e). NY, Semiotext(e).

R. Arnheim "In Praise of Blindness" in Strauss, N., Ed. (1993). Radiotext(e). NY, Semiotext(e).

Bazin "An Aesthetic of Reality" in Bazin, A. (1967). What Is Cinema? Berkeley, U of CA. vol. II. Berkeley, U of CA.

Stephen Heath, "Narrative Space" in Heath, Questions of Cinema (Indiana)

### BOOKS

The following books have been requested for one day reserve in the library:

Abel, R., Ed. (1988). French Film Theory and Criticism: 1907-1939. Princeton, Princeton UP. vol. 1

Abel, R., Ed. (1988). French Film Theory and Criticism: 1907-1939. Princeton, Princeton UP. vol. 2

Bazin, A. (1967). What Is Cinema? Berkeley, U of CA.

Bazin, A. (1971). What is Cinema? vol. II. Berkeley, U of CA.

Browne, N., Ed. (1990). Cahiers du Cinéma, 1969-1972: The Politics of Representation. Cambridge MA, Harvard UP.

Eagle, H., Ed. (1981). Russian Formalist Film Theory. Ann Arbor, Michigan Slavic Publications.

Mast, G., Ed. (1982). The Movies in Our Midst. Chicago, U of Chicago.

Nichols, B., Ed. (1976). Movies and Methods. Berkeley, U of CA.

Nichols, B., Ed. (1985). Movies and Methods II. Berkeley, U of CA.

Rosen, P., Ed. (1986). *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*. NY, Columbia UP.

Sarris, A. (1968). *The American Cinema: Directors and directions, 1929-1968*. NY, E. P. Dutton.

Robert Stam and Toby Miller, eds. *Film and Theory: An Anthology* (Malden MA: Blackwell, 2000).

Taylor, R. and I. Christie, Eds. (1988). *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents, 1896-1939*. Cambridge MA, Harvard UP.